

# Mainely Landlords

*For landlords with tenants who have Housing Choice Vouchers from MaineHousing*

SPRING 2017

[www.mainehousing.org](http://www.mainehousing.org)

## Mainely Landlords

### DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

## Potential funding cuts from HUD; VAWA guidance

Many of you may have heard rumors about potential funding cuts at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which could affect rental assistance programs. We have been notified by our HUD representatives in Boston that we will receive less funding this year but that the exact amount of the decrease has not been determined.

Based on the information we received, we have decided to stop issuing vouchers to new program participants, except in the case of some special voucher types like Project-Based Vouchers or those targeted to a specific group of participants such as the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VAISH) vouchers for homeless veterans.



**Lauren Bustard**  
HCV Program  
Director

We will not resume issuing regular vouchers until our voucher count has decreased to the number that our projected funding levels will support. This does not mean that owners will not see any new applications from MaineHousing voucher holders as we will continue to issue vouchers to current program participants who wish to move when they have completed their lease requirements.

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## Lead Hazard Control Program

# Grants, loans can make impact

Exposure to lead-based paint may be harmful to you, your family and your tenants. Lead-based paint still is found in a significant number of single-family and multi-family homes in Maine built before 1978, and is especially toxic to children under six years old.

MaineHousing's Lead Hazard Control Program provides 0% deferred, forgivable loans (interest free with no monthly payments) to landlords, and grants to single-family households, in an effort to make lower-income homes in Maine lead safe.

Making homes lead safe may involve paint removal or stabilization, and window and door replacement.

This program provides up to \$16,000 to eligible owner occupied single-family homeowners, and up to \$10,000 per unit with a 10 unit maximum per landlord for lead safety improvements. For landlords, the entire amount of the deferred forgivable loan is forgiven after 5 years, provided the property isn't refinanced or sold during that time and rental units are reserved for low-income tenants.

**Homeowner eligibility:** If you own a single-family home that was built before 1978, your income is at or below 80% of the area median income, and you have a child under age six years old living at home, you may be eligible. Priority is given to families whose children under age six years old test positive for elevated lead levels in their blood.

**Landlord eligibility:** If you own an affordable multi-family rental property

### LEAD HAZARD CONTROL CONTACTS

**Aroostook County Action Program** (serving Aroostook County)  
(207) 768-3023 or (800) 432-7881

**City of Portland** (serving Cumberland County)  
(207) 874-8983

**Community Concepts, Inc.** (serving Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, and York Counties)  
(207) 743-7716 or (800) 866-5588  
*Lewiston and Auburn residents call (207) 739-6575*

**Penquis Community Action Program** (serving Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Sagadahoc, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington Counties)  
(207) 973-3500 or (800) 215-4942

that was developed before 1978, you may be eligible, provided that the rental units have at least one bedroom, half of the rental units are rented to tenants with household incomes of less than 80% of the area median income and half to tenants with household incomes less than 50% of the area median income. The rental units must be kept affordable for five years.

For more information, please contact the agency in the county where you live from the above list.



**Be part of MaineHousing's Owner Excellence Program!**

Learn more at [MaineHousing.org](http://MaineHousing.org)

## Your rental property is an investment. Don't let it go up in smoke.



For help implementing a smoke-free policy for your rentals, contact the Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine at (207) 874-8774 or [info@smokefreeforme.org](mailto:info@smokefreeforme.org)



Save money and lives by adopting a smoke-free policy. It's a win-win for you AND your tenants. [www.smokefreeforme.org](http://www.smokefreeforme.org)

MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, age, familial status or receipt of public assistance in the admission or access to or treatment in its programs and activities. In employment, MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability or genetic information. MaineHousing will provide appropriate communication auxiliary aids and services upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing will also provide this document in alternative formats upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing has designated the following person responsible for coordinating compliance with applicable federal and state nondiscrimination requirements and addressing grievances: Louise Patenaude, Maine State Housing Authority, 353 Water Street, Augusta, Maine 04330-4633, Telephone Number 1-800-452-4668 (voice in state only), (207) 626-4600 (voice) or Maine Relay 711.

# HCV director: new guidance on VAWA protections

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In other news, new guidance has been issued by HUD on the Housing Protections of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA) of 2013. This act provides protections for those victims of domestic violence (female and male) that are participants in certain federally subsidized rental assistance programs, including the Housing Choice Voucher program.

VAWA covers people who are subject to: domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

The following outlines those protections that affect HCV participants:

**Admissions:**

- An applicant cannot be denied housing on the basis that s/he has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking.

**Evictions and Terminations:**

- A tenant cannot be evicted or have rental assistance terminated on the basis that s/he is or has been a survivor.
- Crimes against a survivor “directly relating to” the abuse are not grounds for evicting the survivor or terminating rental assistance.
- An incident of actual or threatened domestic violence doesn’t constitute a “serious or repeated lease violation” or “good cause” for eviction or subsidy termination.
- Landlords can only evict an HCV participant if they can demonstrate an “actual and imminent threat” to other tenants or employees at the property if the survivor is not evicted.
- HCV program administrators may terminate voucher assistance to the abuser while preserving assistance to the survivor.

**Allowable Moves:**

- If a survivor must move for safety reasons, VAWA allows for moving before the first year lease ends.

**Emergency Transfers:**

- VAWA requires HCV program administrators to create “Emergency Transfer Plans” and implement a process whereby the survivor is assisted in moving to another unit to protect their safety.

**Requiring Proof of Domestic Violence:**

- HCV program administrators and landlords can only require third-party documentation proving domestic violence when two household members claim to be the victim and name the other household member as the perpetrator.

**Notification:**

- VAWA requires that HCV program administrators provide the HUD notice of VAWA housing rights and a domestic violence self-certification form to applicants and tenants:
  - at the time an applicant is denied admission into the program
  - at the time the individual is admitted; and
  - with any notification of eviction or termination of assistance.

**Lease Addendum:**

- HUD now requires a Lease Addendum (see photo above) regarding VAWA rights be completed and signed by tenant and landlord and submitted with any new lease for an HCV program participant.

Questions? Please contact me at lbustard@mainehousing.org or HCV Program Manager Allison Gallagher at agallagher@mainehousing.org.

We hope to meet many of you in person at one of the three landlord outreach scheduled for 2017. Almost 40 landlords attended the first one in Brewer on May 5. Two more will be scheduled for the fall.

# 10-year sealed lithium battery detectors OK for use in units

MaineHousing’s Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) is making a change to its allowable smoke and CO2 detectors policy. Landlords and property owners are asked to read below to learn what is allowable.

HCV’s Inspections Services department now is allowing 10-year sealed lithium battery CO2 detectors as an alternative to hardwired with battery back-up or wall outlet plug-in style devices.

Also, inspectors are allowing 10-year sealed lithium style smoke detectors in 1- and 2-unit buildings in place of the typical 9 volt or AA-style battery devices.

Our frequently asked questions along with answers are:

**Question:** The packaging states that the detector has a 10-year limited warranty on the detector, will this be okay?

**Answer:** No. The packaging should state that the detector has a 10-year sealed lithium battery inside.

**Question:** Can I use a dual-style device that detects smoke and CO2 as long as it is a 10-year sealed lithium battery unit?

**Answer:** Yes. But it can only be used in 1- and 2-unit buildings as a stand-alone detector. In buildings with 3 or more units, the smoke detectors will still need to hardwired with battery back-up. BUT you are welcome to add as many of these style detectors as you want.

**Question:** Can I use a regular battery style detector and put lithium batteries in it?

**Answer:** No. The 10-year sealed lithium device has no access to the battery source and must be disposed of when the device has expired or when it is no longer operational when tested.

Please note that these are only MaineHousing requirements. You will need to check with your town/city regarding local requirements.

If you have further questions about our smoke and CO2 detection policy, please call Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspections Team Leader Rob Seavey at (207) 512-0955.

## Testimonial

### Landlord helps tenant bring family together again

I have read that the purpose of a good landlord is to keep things going – and going totally unnoticed.

Without Megunticook Realty’s attention to detail, our home would not be so well maintained. Without their groundskeepers, our yards would not look so nice and be safe to play in. Without their watchful gaze, my family would not feel so secure.

Most importantly, without the generosity of MaineHousing, my family would never have this wonderful opportunity to come back together in a community that is known for its strong family ethic.

I am truly grateful to Camden for being what the town is. I am thankful to MaineHousing for helping us move to this town, and to Megunticook Realty for its ownership and management of my apartment. This company is one of the major reasons why we are getting our children back.

- A happy tenant

## Landlord Lunch & Learn in Brewer!



Almost 40 Bangor-Brewer area landlords and property owners attended our Landlord Lunch & Learn on May 5 at Brewer Housing Authority. MaineHousing is grateful to Brewer, Bangor, and Old Town Housing Authorities for their support in hosting this event. Participants listened to presentations from (above, from left) Housing Choice Voucher Program Director Lauren Bustard; HQS Inspections Team Leader Rob Seavey; Attorney Joseph Bethony of Gross, Minsky & Mogul Attorneys at Law; Josh D’Alessio, manager of homeless initiatives of Hope House; Loretta Tomes, project coordinator of Community Mediation Services; and Mel Clarrage and Jill Johanning of Alpha One.

Thank you, too, to our partners: Northeast Restoration and Remodeling, Efficiency Maine, Machias Savings Bank, Sherwin Williams, Penobscot Community Health Care, Greater Bangor Apartment Owners and Managers Association, and Lowe’s.